

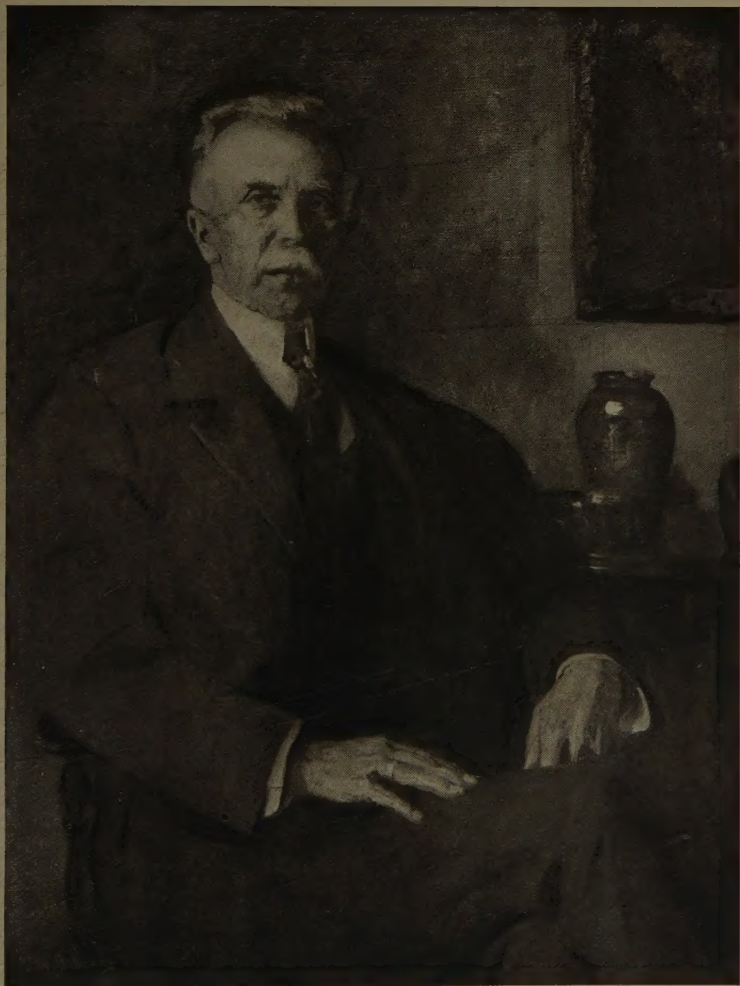
Bulletin of the Rhode Island School of Design

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ISAAC COMSTOCK BATES

1843-1913

FROM A PORTRAIT BY FRANK W. BENSON

THE Trustees of the Rhode Island School of Design at a meeting held on the eighth of January, 1913, voted to adopt the following memorial, and to cause the same to be entered in their records and offered to the press for publication.

Memorial

ISAAC COMSTOCK BATES, President of the Rhode Island School of Design, died on the first of this month, after an illness of several months. He has held the office of President since 1907, having previously been Vice-President since 1890, and Trustee since 1885. In common with the people of Providence, to whom, in varied relations, and in a large way, he has been a real and honored benefactor, the Trustees of the Rhode Island School of Design greatly lament his death. Quietly, generously and effectively he has served as a member of important boards of management concerned with the administration of fiduciary and philanthropic institutions, and he has given liberally of his time, his wise counsels, and his substance, to promote good causes of every kind. The entire city is his debtor.

The Rhode Island School of Design in particular stood in intimate relation to his dominant tastes, and he dedicated to it constant, devoted and thoughtful service, and many a precious and costly gift. He was for many years an untiring working member of the Museum Committee, and since he became President, a member of the Executive Committee, and of the Library Committee. This School was ever in his thoughts and he was often within its walls. His love of art and his refined taste in art made him excellent in counsel. As he chose with rare discrimination all works of art that he acquired, his loans and gifts to the School were of exceptional beauty and value. It is difficult to attempt to give any adequate account of the extent and the worth of what he did for the School, and of his benefactions to it. In every way he showed that he loved it, and he was ever eager to promote its welfare. By the rich and generous provisions of his last will and testament he has confirmed and enlarged his abiding and affectionate liberality to the School, and has caused his good works to live after him unendingly. Forever the name of ISAAC COMSTOCK BATES should be remembered here as one of those who determined, shaped and secured the existence of the Rhode Island School of Design during its formative years.

Finally, the Trustees of the Rhode Island School of Design, while they seek, all too inadequately, to express their sense of the virtues and the works of ISAAC COMSTOCK BATES, cannot forget that in his death they have been deprived of one of the best of comrades and friends. His honest heart, his high integrity, his plain sincerity, were illumined by a genial nature, a kindly spirit, and a sweet temper, that won the love of those who were brought into companionship with him. They found in him a friend, and they will never cease to feel the loss of his kind and cheering presence. And to those more nearly related by ties of kindred, or more closely bound to him by long and intimate fellowship, the Trustees of the Rhode Island School of Design tender their true and heartfelt sympathy.



"AUTUMN"

BY GEORGE INNESS

THE striking feature of the Isaac Comstock Bates bequest is the light it throws upon the breadth of vision and the versatility of the collector as an art patron. Visitors to the galleries have, for several years, doubtless, noted a large number of objects of art interest which merited their study, as coming from Mr. Bates either as a gift or a loan. To visit the galleries to-day, and to note the many former loans, now a part of the bequest, and added to these the wealth

of works of art which have been in his home, would only emphasize the indebtedness of the School of Design and the beauty-loving public to the donor of the bequest.

It is characteristic of Mr. Bates in making his selection of oil paintings to show partiality to the work of the American School. Of these in the landscape school the ones which merit the closest consideration are by George Inness and Alexander H. Wyant. The group of

Innesses is a very representative one, from various periods of his career. "The Roman Campagna," which is dated in 1875, and the "Italian Landscape," recall some of the inspiration which came to him as he made his pilgrimages to Italy. The "Medfield," dated also in 1875, is one of those charming studies of sunshine and fresh green vegetation which find their origin in his stay in Medfield, Massachusetts for several years. Here some of his best work was done, and a facility of expression was gained which characterized his later work. The most popular one is perhaps that called "Autumn." Aside from the interest in the gorgeous dress of the giant trees, the study of light on the flat plain beyond and the general feeling of atmosphere all through the work make it well worthy of study. This group of five Innesses is not open to question regarding their authenticity, for almost all of them were purchased directly from the artist's studio by Mr. Bates.

This is likewise true in the case of the group of paintings by Wyant. His response to the varying moods of nature, especially in the more sober periods of sunset and twilight, is evident in the five examples of his work in the bequest. His characteristic treatment of distance is seen in the "Landscape, Keene Valley."

Other examples of the older American landscape school are from the brushes of such artists as Edward M. Bannister, John Noble Barlow, T. Foxcroft Cole, Samuel Coleman, Sanford R. Gifford, R. Swain Gifford, John F. Kensett, Jervis McEntee, J. F. Murphy, Thomas Robinson and Worthington Whittredge. Among the later artists there are Charles W. Woodbury, Charles W. Stetson, William M. Chase and Elihu Vedder.

There are two of the American group which give the bequest unusual distinction. The first is a small portrait by Gilbert Stuart, probably of President Madison. This apparently is one of the series called the "Gibbs Portraits of the Presidents." The second is the "Mother and Child" by William Morris Hunt,

painted with that delicate sense of color-harmony and that softness of effect which reveals the master-hand. Although small in size, the quality of the work makes it of great importance and an addition to any collection of works of art.

Most of these were smaller pictures which had been hanging in his home; among the larger pictures which the public has already had considerable opportunity to study are a number by Frank W. Benson. Here the strong virile portrait of Mr. Bates, the "Spring" and "Autumn" (studies for decorations in the Congressional Library at Washington), the "Bather," and especially the "Summer" with its wealth of sunlight on wind-blown dresses and rippling sea, all are "museum" pictures of decided interest. With these should also be mentioned a "Portrait of a Lady" by Edmund C. Tarbell, the "Pink Lady" by W. M. Chase, and the "Girl in White" by Charles W. Hawthorne.

Although Mr. Bates' interest was apparently primarily in the American School when considering paintings, he was able to secure several European examples of interest and importance. The Barbizon School is represented by a "Landscape" and a group of "Dogs" by Diaz, while examples of the work of Jules Dupré are seen in "Cows Drinking" and a "Landscape." With these might also be mentioned paintings by Courbet, Largillière and Van Marcke. In this group there is also an excellent Jacque with a characteristic group of "Sheep."

Lovers of the work of Wyant and Homer will find that these two artists are unusually well represented in the small collection of water-colors which came as a part of the bequest.

In 1872, Charles Sumner wrote an essay on "The Best Portraits in Engraving." Although the whole range of engraving since the Renaissance was covered in the essay, the selection of engravings was made with such a high standard that the number is relatively small. Mr. Bates was impressed with the essay and for

years has attempted to secure the best examples of the portraits named. The result is that the School of Design has become the possessor of some of the finest engraved portraits to be found anywhere. The print-lover and the collector of engravings is invited to enjoy such masterpieces as Durer's portrait of Erasmus, Goltzius' portrait of Theodore Cœrnbert, that of Jan Lutma by Rembrandt, Vandyck's portrait of Francis Snyder; that of Philippe de Champagne by Edelinck, Drevet's superb portrait of Bossuet, and Bervic's engraving after Callet's portrait of Louis XVI. These and others go to make the collection distinctive.

Aside from the "Sumner portraits" work of the graver and the burin is seen from the hands of such artists as Chauvel, Daubigny, Seymour Haden, Jacque, Jongkind, Claude Lorraine, A. Waterloo, Burleigh, and Stetson.

In this connection should be mentioned the work of Mr. W. P. Nicholson. With the exception of the portraits, the series consists of the original wood-block prints, colored by the artist himself. The whole series up-to-date is given by Mr. Bates including the "Almanac of Twelve Sports," the "Alphabet," "London Types," "Characters of Romance" and a part of the "Twelve Portraits."

One of the branches of applied arts which often attracts collectors is that of jewelry, especially rings. To the School of Design such work is of great value, both for its interest to the student of design and the visitor to the galleries. The bequest under consideration contained a large number of rings, watches, necklaces, and brooches from many sources and various periods.

The catholicity of Mr. Bates' taste is well illustrated in the collection of Japanese and Chinese objects which have now found a permanent home in the Museum. Yielding to the charm of design and artistic spirit of the East, Mr. Bates gathered a very representative series of objects. In pottery and porcelain may

be found examples from many potters and centers of ceramic production. The Raku bowls, the Kutani ware, Owari and Satsuma, Kyoto and Ninsei work, these and many others may be studied in the Japanese gallery; as well as Chinese work of several periods from the late Ming to the middle of the nineteenth century. An excellent collection of decorative wooden panels, stonework, cloisonné, prints, stencils and metal-work will also be found to be of decided interest.

This same wideness of interest is seen in the Javanese printed textiles and weapons, the East Indian fabrics and embroideries, the English table-glass and the European faience.

A friend of Mr. Bates has written a very appreciative foreword to the Memorial



Japanese DECORATIVE PANELS Wood
I. C. BATES Bequest

Catalogue. In it, the bequest is characterized as "the life long work of a lover of beauty who was also a lover of his fellow-men." The truth of this statement will be made more apparent as those who visit or frequent the museum galleries find opportunity to study in detail the wealth of this important addition to the collections. Those who gather works of art, whether they realize it or not, are building for the future. Sooner or later examples will find their proper place in museum galleries. This important fact was realized by Mr. Bates, and it is characteristic of the man that he bequeathed his treasures to a public museum, so that the institution and the public might secure at once the association with those works of art which he was able to bring together.

"What he loved and sought and found he has lavished upon us. Let us rejoice and be very grateful for ourselves and those who come after us."

THE foregoing brief survey of the works of art in the bequest should be supplemented by a statement throwing further light on Mr. Bates' farsightedness. From his long association with the School of Design in an official way, he came to realize the difficulties of maintenance and support which seems to be one of the ever present problems of art schools and museums of art everywhere. In addition to the wealth of objects representative of many lines of artistic production, the bequest further contained a sum of money to the amount of \$55,000. In the same liberal spirit the use of this sum is at the discretion of the School of Design. Although the use of all this amount is not immediately available it will eventually assist in broadening the work of the School and the Museum along such lines as would have met with the approval of its friend and late President, Mr. Isaac Comstock Bates.

SIZE OF THE BEQUEST.

The importance of any gift or bequest depends on quality as well as size or number, but it is of interest to add the following figures to the very brief appreciation which is found in these pages. The bequest includes one hundred and ninety-one oil paintings, ninety-one water-colors and drawings, two hundred and thirty-eight etchings and engravings, sixty-seven examples of the wood-block prints by Mr. W. P. Nicholson, one hundred and ninety-three pieces of jewelry, forty-six specimens of European faience, seventeen examples of table-glass, a collection of two hundred and fourteen pieces of Japanese and Chinese pottery and porcelain, and three hundred and ninety-one miscellaneous Oriental objects including decorative wood-work, furniture, metal-work, cloisonné, Japanese prints and in-laid combs. To this list must be added twenty-three Javanese printed cottons, four Javanese weapons, twenty-nine Japanese embroideries and textiles, and twenty-five East Indian fabrics and embroideries, and also thirty-six other objects, including the Dexter desk in the Colonial House.

More detailed information about the objects in the bequest than is possible in this short Bulletin may be found in the "Catalogue of the Memorial Exhibition of Works of Art given by Isaac Comstock Bates."

A FARSIGHTED BEQUEST.

"I hereby expressly declare that said legatee has my full consent and approval either to keep and use the same for exhibition or in any other manner or to sell or otherwise dispose of the same as it may deem best."

The above clause of the Isaac Comstock Bates bequest calls attention to one of the many problems which have great influence on institutional work, whether in school or museum, that of the condi-

tions under which gifts and bequests are received. In the early history of our great museums such as those in Boston and New York, several collections and gifts were accepted on condition that the group of objects would always remain intact, would be exhibited always by itself and in the same room, and would bear as prominently as possible the name of the donor. These collections, accepted under such conditions, have almost invariably in the course of years reacted against the welfare of the institution. It has been found, moreover, that works of unusual merit only show off to advantage when placed in the general collection of the galleries, with proper conditions of hanging and lighting, and with such pictures about them as will by comparison and contrast emphasize their real worth.

This state of affairs is not so apparent in the formative stage of development of a museum, when of necessity material for exhibition is eagerly sought for. However, at the present time, the smaller museums are profiting by the sad experiences of the larger ones, and realizing that bequests which impose conditions are very liable to be an ever-increasing handicap, they are not so ready to assume such a burden.

The connoisseur or collector also is realizing that such an arrangement is detrimental to his or her own interests. It is readily seen that every piece which may be chosen is not of the same high standard. Then, too, as the collector's taste and knowledge develops, the standard invariably becomes higher.

The art lover of to-day is beginning to realize that it is an honor most to be desired, to have his especial treasures in the art museum, where they can show off to the best advantage; and that it is not altogether a condescension on his or her part when a gift is made.

This new spirit actuating many donors of valuable gifts to our museum is indicative of a sense of duty to the general public, of thoughtfulness for the advance of taste, and of a farsightedness which

visualizes in a measure a museum of high standards.

The bequest of Mr. Bates was made in this farsighted spirit, with the welfare of the institution and the public in mind, for his entire collection was given without any condition. The institution in accepting the bequest feels very grateful for this thoughtfulness, which has in mind the larger and much more important museum of the future.

THE Memorial Exhibition of the works of art given by Mr. Isaac Comstock Bates was opened on the evening of February twenty-seventh with a private view. In spite of the inclemency of the weather, a large number of persons responded to the invitation, and spent the evening enjoying the wealth of objects shown. On the Sunday following, as part of the regular Sunday docent service, a circuit was made of the galleries in which the exhibition was placed. The interest in evidence at the private view was likewise met with on that Sunday. During the time of the exhibition, the visitors have come to realize more and more the presence of an active art museum in Providence, where a pleasant and profitable afternoon may be spent in the enjoyment of the objects in the Bates bequest and the other treasures of the collections. The exhibition will close on April thirteenth.

The next issue of the Bulletin will contain much interesting material which, because of the space devoted to the epoch-making bequest of Mr. Bates, could not be placed in this number. As stated in the first issue, the Bulletin is for the School as much as the Museum, and its progress will receive due attention in all future numbers. It might be noted, however, at this time, that the registration in the School has continued to increase until it now totals 1102.

*The Bulletin of the
Rhode Island School of Design
Providence*

All communications should be addressed to the
General Editor, Mr. L. E. Rowe.

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MEMBERSHIP

Honorary Members

Governing Members for Life, who pay at one time
\$100.00

Annual Governing Members, who pay annual dues of
\$10.00

Annual Members, who pay annual dues of \$3.00

ADMISSIONS.

HOURS OF OPENING.—The galleries
are open to the public on every day of the
year, with the exception of Thanksgiving
Day, Christmas Day, and the Fourth of
July. From July 1st to September 15th
the hours are from 1 to 5 P. M. on week
days and from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays; from
September 15th to July 1st the hours are
from 10 A. M. to 5 P. M. week days and
from 2 to 5 P. M. Sundays. The Pendle-

ton Collection is open from 2 to 5 P. M.
daily.

Twenty-five cents admission to the
museum is charged on Mondays, Wednes-
days and Fridays and the museum is free
on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and
Sundays.

Free transferable tickets admitting four
persons on pay-days are sent to all mem-
bers of the corporation. Art students
and artists, on application to the authori-
ties, may obtain free tickets of admission
for pay-day. Teachers with pupils of
both public and private schools will be
admitted without payment upon applica-
tion.

PHOTOGRAPHS ON SALE.

Photographic copies of many of the ob-
jects belonging to the museum, including
photographs of the Pendleton Collection
of furniture, are on sale at the entrance to
the museum.

PUBLICATIONS.

Three bulletins and a year-book are to
be issued quarterly and are sent free of
charge to the members, and, on written re-
quest, to alumni of the institution.

The "Catalogue of the Memorial Ex-
hibition of Works of Art given by Isaac
Comstock Bates" will be forwarded to
any address for twenty-five cents. A copy
will gladly be sent on application to any
of the subscribers of the School of Design
who have not as yet received their copy.

COPYING.

Permission to copy or photograph in the
galleries of the museum may be obtained
in the office. Such permits will not be
issued for Sundays or legal holidays.

LIBRARY.

The Library contains 2,150 volumes,
11,000 mounted photographs and repro-
ductions, 600 lantern slides, and about 500
postcards. The attendance during the
past three months has been 2,637, while
the circulation was 1,249 books and 3,862
plates.